

# Utah's Asthma Chronicle



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## Green and Healthy Homes Initiative

Mayor Peter Corroon signed a compact on November 28 to establish the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) in Salt Lake County. The GHHI connects funding and programs addressing weatherization, energy efficiency, health, and safety to improve housing and health outcomes for low-to moderate-income families in the county.

The GHHI includes an in-home assessment and energy audit. Based on this assessment, an intervention plan is created for the home. These interventions cover a broad range of issues and may include: mold remediation; weather-stripping; caulking to seal holes and air leakage; improving insulation; replacing air filters; lead hazard prevention; radon testing and mediation, and; installation of smoke and CO alarms. Interventions will help lower utility bills as well as improve health, reducing health care costs associated with asthma, lead poisoning, and other home-based health and safety hazards.

Families with young children in particular can benefit from the GHHI because children are especially vulnerable to health and safety hazards like mold and lead.

One important focus for GHHI is homes where a resident, especially a child, has asthma. About 240,000 Utahns – 9% of adults and 7% of children – have asthma.

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# Smoking in Cars

The Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Utah (CTFU) is working through educational advocacy efforts to impact the following legislative campaigns this year: ban smoking in cars with children present; taxes on smokeless tobacco products, and; regulation of dissolvable tobacco products.

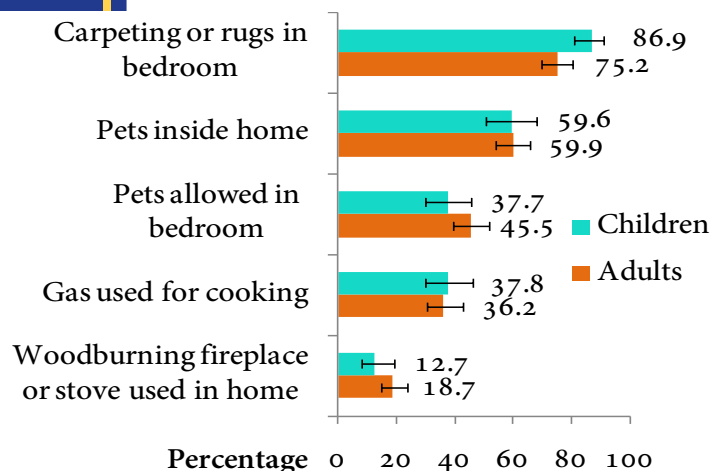
During the Health and Human Services Interim Meeting, Representative Patrice Arent distributed her draft legislation labeled “Protection of Children Riding in Motor Vehicles”. The bill would prohibit a person from smoking in a motor vehicle if a child who is 15 years of age or younger is a passenger. Many testified in support of the legislation including the PTA, law enforcement, several pediatricians and the Utah Medical Association.

Next, CTFU is taking a strong educational and communication role against smokeless tobacco products. The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) adopted a resolution, backed by tobacco companies, to urge states to enact tax laws pushing cigarette smokers to use smokeless tobacco, because it is “less harmful.” Efforts will focus on debunking this myth and ensuring that legislators and the general public have credible information related to the harmful effects of all tobacco products.

Finally, dissolvable tobacco products contain significant amounts of nicotine and pose a risk of toxicity. The FDA recently presented information related to adverse events with dissolvable tobacco in the pediatric population. These products have become available in test markets around the country and are adjacent to candy displays. CTFU is working to educate legislators to ensure that dissolvable tobacco products are regulated the same as other tobacco products.

## Triggers in the Home

Environmental Triggers in the Homes of Children and Adults with Current Asthma, Utah, 2009-2010



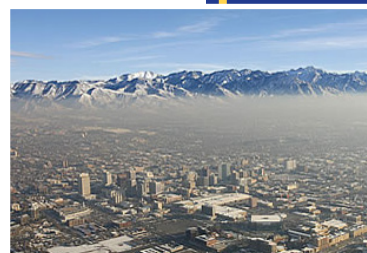
Adults and children with current asthma were asked several questions regarding exposure to potential indoor environmental triggers. At left are the top five potential indoor environmental triggers that adults and children reported exposure to. They include carpeting/rugs, pets inside the home, pets allowed in the bedroom, gas used for cooking, and woodburning fireplace or stove used in home. This information will assist the Green and Healthy Homes Initiative as these triggers are most likely to be in the homes they will be assessing.

# Asthma and Weather

It's the time of year when poor air quality caused by inversions becomes a health concern for many Utahns, especially children and those with asthma. Inversions are a common occurrence in Utah. They form when the right weather conditions—cold temperatures and no breezes—cause the cold air to become trapped close to valley floors.

An inversion will stay until wind or a storm front comes through. The “typical” period is from a few days to a week. The longer the inversion lasts, the more pollution there is in the air. Increases in the incidence of asthma symptoms and attacks, absenteeism from activities, and emergency department visits are seen during long inversions.

The [Recess Guidance for Schools](#) and [PM2.5 Tracking Sheet](#) can help both children and adults learn what level of PM2.5 they are sensitive to. This will help schools and individuals know when to move physical activity indoors to avoid exposure to PM2.5. To check current air quality, visit [www.airquality.utah.gov/](http://www.airquality.utah.gov/).



## Task Force Spotlight

As Utah School Nurse Consultant, Catherine Sparks divides her time between the Utah Department of Health and the Utah State Office of Education. Sparks received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Indiana University, and a Masters with a specialty in School Nursing from Wright State University in Ohio. She is also nationally recognized as a certified school nurse.

Catherine recently moved back home to Utah to assist her elderly mother. Most of her own children are adults, while her youngest will graduate from high school in the spring of 2013. She has several grandchildren in Utah and enjoys spending time hearing about dresses, dances, and deer hunting adventures. Says Catherine, “Nothing beats the innocence of a 7-year-old grandson giving butterfly kisses.” A little known fact about Catherine is that she loves to scuba dive.

As a new member of the Utah Asthma Task Force, Catherine has many goals and is eager to help. She hopes to provide insight from the school/school nurse perspective. In addition, she wants to share her first-hand knowledge about how to work with parents, physicians, and pharmacists. She hopes to find a way to improve the school nurse-to-student ratio in Utah, as it is currently one of the lowest in the nation.

Welcome to the Utah Asthma Task Force, Catherine, and thank you for your enthusiasm!

# Green and Healthy Homes

Cont. from page 1

“Every day, an average of 20 people in Utah have an asthma attack so severe they need treatment at a hospital,” said Kellie Baxter, Health Program Specialist for the Utah Department of Health Asthma Program.

Environmental triggers play an important role in asthma management, explains Michelle Hofmann, M.D., a pediatrician in Salt Lake City. “Medical treatment alone is not sufficient to address the most severe cases of asthma,” said Hofmann. “The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative will help families recognize the importance of environment in asthma management and how to reduce asthma triggers in their home. This can prevent asthma symptoms and help reduce health care costs associated with asthma episodes.”

The signing of the GHHI compact marks the beginning stages in developing the program in Salt Lake County. Randy Jepperson, Manager of the Salt Lake County Housing Program, has been instrumental in bringing the program to Utah. “We are excited to bring this program to Salt Lake County and believe it will help improve housing and health for those who are most in need,” said Jepperson. “We are grateful for the support of Mayor Corroon and our partners who are making this ideal become a reality.”

Mayor Corroon was joined at the compact signing by representatives from various organizations in Salt Lake, including the Utah Asthma Task Force. For more information about GHHI Salt Lake, visit <http://greenandhealthyhomessaltlake.org/>



## Asthma Plan Highlight

The Utah Legislative Session is just around the corner. Policy development and implementation is one goal area of the Utah Asthma Plan. The goal states: “Develop and implement policies that create communities conducive to people with asthma living the highest possible quality of life.” Some of the strategies outlined include:

- \* Increase adherence to the asthma medication self-administration law
- \* Implement at least one new asthma-related policy in schools
- \* Improve reimbursement structure for asthma management activities
- \* Support and maintain the nurse-to-student ratio and seek to improve the ratio

If you are interested in helping with any of these strategies, please contact a member of the Asthma Program Staff listed on page one of this newsletter.

# Top Asthma Blog

Writer Tracy Rosecrans of the popular website [www.healthline.com](http://www.healthline.com), which seeks to improve health through information acknowledged that, because of the increased diagnosis of asthma, particularly in young children, parents are looking for resources and information that are relatable to them and their circumstance. Technology has improved access to resources, and blogs are one resource many people are using to talk about health issues and how they are coping and learning from them. A simple Internet search can yield a wealth of information.



Health Line released its list of the [Top Ten Asthma Blogs of 2012](#). Andrea, a member of the Utah Asthma Task Force, is [My Life as an Asthma Mom](#). The information on her blog is not just helpful to parents, but to anyone in any profession with an interest in asthma.

## New Asthma Program Staff Member

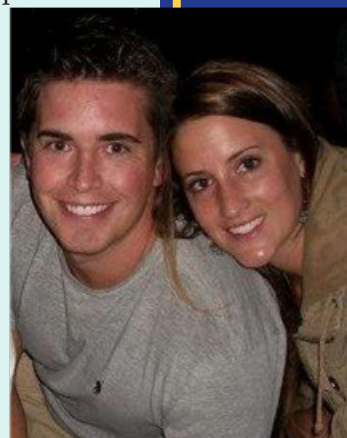
**Holly Uphold** is a PhD student in Sociology focusing on populations and health. She recently published her Master's thesis and has taught Medical Sociology at the University of Utah for two years. She finds her passion in using data to inform public health issues.

Before joining the Asthma Program, Holly interned for the Utah Department of Health Tobacco Prevention and Control Program. She was also a research assistant at the Rocky Mountain Occupational and Environmental Health Center, where she worked with researchers to identify and analyze health problems in the U.S. truck driver population. She did the same with data on chronic low back pain among workers in manufacturing centers across Utah.

Holly's responsibilities now include maintaining and enhancing the Asthma Program surveillance system, analyzing and disseminating data, and providing epidemiology and evaluation support.

Holly looks forward to helping partners and the public use and understand the power of data-driven decisions in public health, while also highlighting the importance of asthma as a chronic health condition.

She enjoys spending time with her husband, and together they enjoy hiking, political debates, and traveling. Holly also enjoys reading historical fiction, running, and anything crafty, especially sewing.



# Upcoming Events

## Ongoing:

**Asthma-Friendly Child Care:** Contact Kellie at [kabaxter@utah.gov](mailto:kabaxter@utah.gov) to schedule a training

**Winning With Asthma:** An online asthma training program for coaches and PE teachers available at [www.winningwithasthma.org](http://www.winningwithasthma.org)

**Asthma School Resource Manual:** Contact Philip at [paharris@utah.gov](mailto:paharris@utah.gov) to schedule a training

## January:

**8:** Asthma Task Force Meeting, Cannon Health Building room 125, Salt Lake City, 7:30 a.m.-9:00 a.m.

## February:

**5:** Asthma Telehealth Series 12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m. Online registration at [www.health.utah.gov/asthma](http://www.health.utah.gov/asthma). For more information contact Kellie at [kabaxter@utah.gov](mailto:kabaxter@utah.gov)

**23:** American Lung Association in Utah, Fight for Air Climb, Wells Fargo Center. Information at <http://www.lung.org/pledge-events/ut/salt-lake-city-climb-fy13/>

## April:

**2:** Asthma Task Force Meeting, Cannon Health Building room 125, Salt Lake City, 7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

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